

*The Nature and Reasonableness of the Inward Call  
and Outward Mission to the Holy Ministry con-  
sider'd.*

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A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the  
Right Reverend Father in GOD  
T H O M A S  
L O R D B I S H O P of OXFORD,

A T T H E  
O R D I N A T I O N held at *Christ-Church*,  
On *Sunday, Dec. 22. 1745.*  
And before the UNIVERSITY of *Oxford*,  
At *St. Mary's*,  
On *Sunday, March 2. 1745-6.*

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MATT. IX. 38.

*Pray Ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest, that He will send forth Labourers into his Harvest.*

THE enemies to our religion, and consequently to the preachers of it, among other objections made to the sacred order, call in question, and ridicule the authority of their mission. The solemn rite of ordination has been represented as nothing more than the grant of a common licence to exercise a certain calling. It has been scornfully ask'd, "what does the hand of the bishop convey? or "how does it appear that it conveys any thing? "What alteration for the better is to be found "in the person, the endowments, or the spirit "of the party ordain'd? What spiritual gift confer'd? How does it appear that he has any "moral sufficiency which he had not before?"

The *call* of the Holy Ghost is ridiculed into a sordid prospect of power and wealth, or the low necessity of a maintenance. Every vice or bad example of particular persons in the ministry is industriously selected, if not injuriously aggravated,



vated, and made an argument against the sanctity of the whole order. Whilst every attempt in the minister of Christ to vindicate his office is loaded with the opprobrious names of spiritual pride and priestcraft.<sup>a</sup> Hard fate of those who are called to be *stewards of the ministers of God*, that to retain the character of an humble modesty, they must be *ashamed* of their commission! that to secure themselves from the censure and ridicule of men, they must be perfidious to their master, and disown his credentials!

There are indeed men of late gone out from among us, (I cannot say that they are of us) who with a view to support their character, too highly magnify their calling: who pretend to fuller directions, and stronger impulses of the Spirit, than our religion warrants, or the necessities of the church require. Such defenders, as these, are rather enemies to the cause which they mean to support; and by assuming too much, prejudice their claim to *that*, which they might otherwise have a just title to. At the same time an unhappy pride has taught them to despise or pity those, who cannot feel such impulses of the Spirit, as they pretend to be more immediately directed by in disturbing the peace, the rules, and establishments of society.

<sup>a</sup> See the Independent Whig, No. 10. 17. 41.



Amidst these malicious censures, this bitterness of clamour and ridicule on the one hand; these vain and arrogant pretensions on the other; the faithful ambassador of Christ will not be afraid to maintain his character: but at the same time he will study to recommend it by the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Tho' he loves not contention, yet he will not be beat out of his station by the violent assaults of his adversaries, nor laught out of it by the smartness of their wit. But let the man of God lift up his head amidst his enemies that *have set themselves against him round about*, with a dignity that becomes his office: let his deportment indeed be *humble*, but not *mean*: condescending to answer the several scruples, and yielding somewhat to the infirmity of his hearers; but not slavishly submitting to their humours, or their prejudices. In short tho' he be studious with a true christian meekness to discharge every office of good-nature, and with all the benevolent humility of his blessed Lord, be ready even *to wash the disciples feet*, yet he must not suffer himself to be trampled under them. God almighty for the promotion of his own glory in the general welfare of his people, hath committed to him a sacred character, and it is his duty, for the sake of that people, both by argument and behaviour to support the dignity

nity of it. Since by every infringement made upon his character, it's intended influence over Mankind will suffer.

It will not therefore I hope be thought foreign to the purposes of this audience, in which there are many preparing themselves to become future instructors and ornaments of the church of Christ;

*First*, to state the true nature of the *ministerial call*, and to shew in what sense the church proposes this question to every candidate for the sacred office; "Do You trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost; that you are called according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ to take upon you this office and ministrations?"

*Secondly*, to state the nature of the *ministerial mission*, and shew in what sense these words are to be understood in the form of ordaining priests, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the church of God."

*Thirdly*, to obviate some objections which have been rais'd against the form of ordination used by our church. And then,

*Fourthly*, to conclude with an inference or two.

*First*,

*First* then I am to state the nature of the *ministerial call*. And I shall beg leave to enter upon this head by proposing a previous question or two to our adversary about the *reasonableness* of such a *call*. What absurdity then can he find in this transaction that the all-wise God by his providence should preside in the government of the *moral*, as well as of the *natural* world? that He should be the same God of order in both? Nay does there not seem to be more reason for his providential interposition in the *former* than in the *latter*? forasmuch as the parts of the *natural* world when once digested into order, cannot but preserve that order: they cannot but perform their prescribed motions, as long as that power continues to be impress'd upon them by which they first began to move. But the *moral* world may *corrupt* itself, and introduce disorder and confusion into the system of intellectual agents. Why then should it be thought unreasonable that God should send and commission proper persons to restore that regularity it had lost; to assist reason in her combat against passion; and when the traces of virtue are well nigh totally effaced, to draw the lines of it afresh upon the mind?

Not that God acts *ordinarily* in this case by irresistible impulse, which would so far destroy the



the free-agency of the person commission'd ; nor by *sensible* operations, which might detract from it ; which might tend to introduce pride and presumption in those who felt such manifest marks of his favour ; despondency in those who felt them not ; which in short might make his interpositions too frequent, and thereby lessen the efficacy of them. But the means whereby He actuates men, are such as concur and coincide with the course of their own natural reason. So that the operations of his *Spirit* in the *moral* world are like those of the *wind* in the *natural* ; *thou hearest the sound thereof and perceivest it's effects, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth.*

There seems then to be little ground in reason for those arrogant pretensions of our modern enthusiasts to fuller, and even *sensible* directions of the spirit ; tho' it may be very difficult to convince them of their error. For indeed we cannot argue against the *senses* of men ; and it would be in vain to affirm to them that they do *not* feel, what they as positively assert they *do*. But let these men take heed lest the vanity of a conceited heart impose upon them, and delude them into false persuasions : lest they *feel*, what they ought *not* to feel, a spirit of error and presumption instead of the Spirit of God. For God ordinary

dinary acts upon men in a manner consistent with their nature, as they are free-agents. He directs *brutes* by instinct, of which alone they are capable : but he leads *man* by reasonable suggestions, which are *the cords of a man*.

It may be ask'd then ; If *this* be the case ; if we cannot ordinarily distinguish between the suggestions of our own *natural reason*, and the dictates of the *divine Spirit* ; how can a man satisfy himself that he is *inwardly call'd* by the Holy Ghost to the office of ministering in the church of God ?

In order to satisfy this question, we may observe, that the all-wise God ever adapts his means to the end proposed. In common *ordinary* cases he makes use of common *ordinary* means. Where the end proposed is *extraordinary*, the means will be proportion'd to it. He has sometimes thought it expedient to make more immediate and express manifestations of himself to some of the sons of men. But in these cases He has always given them sufficient evidence of these divine communications of himself to them ; and has enabled them to prove the reality of them to others by some *extraordinary* powers. Such as were those miraculous powers given to the apostles to prove to them and to mankind the reality of their commission, and promote the reception of

Christianity in the world. But where the end proposed is nothing singular in itself, and *ordinary* means may be sufficient, it would be absurd to wait for any *singular* communications, or *extraordinary* direction. And in such cases we may ask, how we can conceive the Spirit of God to direct a moral agent to any particular end, in an *ordinary* way, more clearly, than by endowing him with proper abilities to promote that end; by placing opportunities in his way of improving those abilities; and by giving him an inclination to employ them in the pursuit of this end? An inclination of the will then may be the secret operation of God's Holy Spirit upon it: but then we must conclude, that the person so inclined shall also find in himself abilities equal to the pursuit.

When a man therefore can satisfy himself, that he is endow'd with faculties qualifying him for a due discharge of the ministerial office; when he has had a proper education to improve those abilities, which the God of nature hath given him; and has an inclination to undertake the sacred charge, and thereby dedicate his abilities to the promotion of virtue and religion in the world; he may safely conclude that the Lord hath called him; that it is agreeable to the will of that Being who sent him into the world, (as far as  
can



can be discern'd from the general course of his directing providence) that he should enter upon this holy function. Let him offer himself to a ruling pastor in the church of Christ for an *outward calling* or *commission* thereunto.

But yet it is not to be expected that these qualifications should be equal in *all*. Neither can we safely argue from some few infirmities, that the person who labours under them, is thereby absolutely disqualified, and cannot be duly called according to the will of God to the work of the ministry. Though *Moses* was not eloquent, but *slow of speech*, and of *slow tongue*, yet was he for other reasons called by an all-wise God to plead the cause of his people before *Pharaoh*, and afterwards to govern a stiff-necked and rebellious nation. *He who seeth not as man seeth* may observe proper qualifications in men, which *we* do not discover. Neither does the state of the church require the same, or equal abilities in all. He may be able to *instruct*, who is not eloquent to *perswade*. He may be able to deliver the plain doctrines of christianity to an illiterate audience, who is not qualified to contend with the *disputers of this world*, to baffle the assaults, or detect the wiles of scepticism. Men's natural abilities are not therefore to be admitted as the *sole* criterion of their vocation; provided they are not *to-*

*tally* deficient. For *this* we may safely conclude, that an infinitely-wise God cannot have intended any man for *that* office, which He has given him *no* abilities to discharge. But then abilities are relative; and therefore, in particular cases, it would be an arrogant presumption in any man to fix the point where the disqualification of inability begins, except Him, whose province it is to examine, and to whose discretion it is left to admit persons into the sacred office.

The same abilities are not required in every age and country alike. He might appear to great advantage in one age or nation, who perhaps is esteem'd but an illiterate person in another. An age of learning and refinement expects, that it's teachers should be more advanced in literature. For the knowledge of the teacher must always bear a proportion to that of the person whom he instructs. Even in this present age and country, wherein *we* live, such a degree of learning may only fit a man for the rank of a common hearer, as in the darker ages of monkish superstition, or in the midst of a more ignorant uncivilized people, might have qualified him to become a teacher.

Neither are we always to form a judgment from the turn of education, or the particular bent of a man's more youthful studies. The first *rudiments*

*diments* of literature are universal, and common to the several learned professions; so that a person may be at liberty afterwards, if he sees good reason for it, to apply those principles of science to *one* profession, which he at first imbibed, with a view of directing them to *another*. But it will always be the care of the *faithful* governing pastor of the church, not to make priests of the *lowest* of the people, of those who have had *no* liberal or literate education at all; and who may *come crouching to be put into one of the priest's offices only, that they may eat a piece of bread.*

The best and safest criterion of a *divine call*, may perhaps be thought a strong *natural inclination* to promote virtue, and religion in the world, under the sanction and authority of a *divine commission*. And yet even *this* may not be equally strong in all; much must be allow'd to the different complexions and constitutions of men. And God may speak as clearly in the *still small voice*, as through the fuller vent and fire of passion. Since it is not always the warmest inclination which is capable of doing the most good, but that which judges calmly, and sedately, of the properest seasons of address, and then opportunely applies itself to the passions and understandings of men, when the avenues of truth are open.

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A late <sup>a</sup> writer insists much upon a *fervent love of Christ*, as another necessary distinct mark of a *divine call*. Which, (whatever idea he may form of it) cannot certainly be better express'd to others, nor perhaps so clearly, or satisfactorily proved to ourselves, as by a strong inclination, and sincere endeavour to promote the religion of Christ. And therefore it must be included under the general head of *inclination*. For whoever has a fervent love of Christ, will naturally endeavour, according to his station, to promote his religion: and whoever is sincerely inclined to promote *his* religion, may very properly be said in the language of this writer, to *have a love of Christ*. It is certain however, that this was all the proof which the *great shepherd* of the flock required from his apostle St. *Peter* of his love towards him: <sup>b</sup> *Simon son of Jonas lovest thou me? Feed my sheep.*

The same may be said of *that warm and affectionate zeal for the good of souls*, which this author would make another essential mark of a *divine call*. For whoever shall be sincerely inclined to direct and conduct men in the ways of eternal happiness, by a faithful discharge of the *ministerial function*, may surely be said, in the

<sup>a</sup> Mr. Middleton of Bristol in his Enquiry into the Inward Call to the Ministry.      <sup>b</sup> John 21. 16.

best and most proper sense of the word, to have an *affectionate zeal for the good of their souls*; and therefore *this* also may very fairly be reduced under the general head of *inclination*.

But then further, to this *inward* evidence of the spirit, there is, (for the satisfaction of society, for the preservation of order and decency in the church, according to the institution of Christ and his apostles) required the addition of an *outward calling*. Without *this*, how can the people, to whom the priest offers himself as a guide, be satisfied, that he has any title to direct them? How can the ignorant be satisfied, that they may safely receive knowledge at his lips? How can the church be satisfied, that many vain pretenders shall not assume to themselves the sacred office, who have no abilities to discharge it, no inclination to any thing but the temporal advantages which may ensue? Lastly, how can the man himself be satisfied, that he does not confide in greater qualifications than he is really possess'd of? As long as any offices have certain stipends annexed, many unfit and unworthy persons will intrude themselves if they can, for the sake of the profits that accrue; without any conscience of their abilities, or inclination to perform the *duties* of those offices. With good reason then, will every wisely constituted society appoint certain

tain guardians of these offices, to repel the bold invader, to encourage and admit the sincere, deserving candidate. And if this be a prudent caution, where only the *temporal*, or *civil* interests of mankind depend upon the performance ; surely in a matter of more important concern, the *eternal* salvation of men, the church does, with no less good reason, subject every candidate for the ministerial office to the examination of such an holy guardian : such a guardian, whose province it is, solemnly to enquire of the man himself, whether from the disposition of his will, the abilities of his mind, and the tendency of his education, he thinks himself call'd, according to the will of God, to this holy undertaking ; who is to try whether he appears to be so, and according to his apparent qualifications, is either to send him forth into this *field of harvest*, or reject his offers. The *outward* calling then is the best security to the people, of the reality of the *inward* ; and it would be uncharitable, as well as beyond our province, to judge otherwise of the *heart*, where the minister is lawfully commission'd in his *outward person*, according to the institution of Christ and his apostles.

And here give me leave to examine a little a principle laid down by our <sup>a</sup>adversary, which

<sup>a</sup> The Independent Whig, No. 10.



he says, "he will abide by:" but which perhaps may prove a bad support to the weight, which he would lay upon it. He says, that "every one "who has a *power* to do good, has a *call* to do "good;" and would make this an argument against the necessity of a formal ordination. In the first place, he seems to have stated his maxim wrong. He should rather have said, that every one who *thinks* he has a *power* to do good, has a *call* to do good. Yet surely it by no means is to be granted, that what *he* may take to be *natural power* to do good, in any particular way, is a *lawful right* to do good in that way, or that what he may esteem a *power* in himself, *is* such. He may possibly form a wrong judgment of himself, and his own abilities. It is no uncommon thing for men to aspire to offices which they are unfit for. It must be allow'd indeed that every one who has a *power* to do good in his *proper station*, has a *right* to do good in it. But it does not from thence follow that every one who thinks he has a power to do good in any *other* station, has thereby a call or commission to quit his *own*, and intrude himself into that station.

For putting the maxim as our author states it, and supposing that he really *has* a power to do good: yet before his maxim can be allow'd, in the latitude to which he means to extend it, he

ought to prove, what he takes for granted, that a *power* to do good in any station, supercedes the necessity of an *outward commission* to *act* in that station: especially where such commission, according to divine appointment, may be obtain'd upon due application for it.

And we may urge still further, that this maxim proceeds upon a supposal, which, in his extent of it, is not to be allow'd. For we may deny that a man *has* a power to do good to society in general, by quitting his own proper station at pleasure, and intruding himself into that of others: at least we may question, whether he will not do more harm, by introducing a confusion of officers, of ranks and orders of men in society, than he can possibly do good, by any accidental services. For, to carry our author's maxim a little further into civil life, a good magistrate is, no doubt, one of the greatest benefits to society. But suppose every person who could flatter himself into a persuasion, that by the exercise of this office, he could do some eminent good to the community, should immediately, in consequence of such a persuasion, take upon himself authority to issue out writs, and to sit in judgment; or suppose that any one who thought himself singularly well skill'd in the art of war, should immediately commence a general, enlist forces, and begin

begin to discipline an army, without any commission from the state in which he lived, what disorder would such proceedings soon produce in it? What contrariety of laws? What opposition of military discipline? In like manner, if every one who thought himself qualified to do good, by teaching, and ministring in the church, were immediately, upon his own authority, permitted to enter upon the task, what confusion of teachers, what contradiction of doctrines, what vicissitude of ministers, what uncertainty of religious rites, would soon ensue therein?

Our Saviour therefore, who was intended to guide us, by his example, as well as to redeem us, by his death, tho' *fill'd*, from the beginning, *with all the fulness of God*, and therefore wanting not abilities, yet did not enter upon the office of preaching, till openly commission'd thereunto, by a voice from heaven. It was after *that* time, according to the evangelist, that, <sup>a</sup> *Jesus began to preach*. In like manner did He regularly commission his apostles, before they undertook their office. *As my father sent me, so send I you; receive ye the Holy Ghost*. In like manner did they authorize their successors in the several christian churches. Which leads me under my

<sup>a</sup> See Matt. 4. 17. compared with Matt. 3. 17.



*Second* general head, to state the nature of the *ministerial mission*, and enquire in what sense those words are to be understood, “Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the church of God.”

And here, I believe, no prudent person will attempt to maintain, that the words were intended to convey *moral* sanctity, or like a *charm* to infuse any extraordinary illumination into the understanding. But, as the ministerial office is an institution of Christ, whatever grace or gift is annexed, must be derived to it, in virtue of that institution. And, as our church prudently adheres to those sacred rites, which Christ hath instituted, as the surest means to receive the graces, which He hath promis’d, the best way to discover what the church intends by these words, in her form of ordination, will be to enquire what was convey’d in them, by Christ, to his apostles.

The *Holy Ghost* is frequently used in Scripture for some *gift* of the Holy Ghost, by a common metonymy in speech of the cause for the effect. Now we do not read, that this was any *moral* sanctity; and it is plain from the scriptures, that it was not the gift of working miracles: for the extraordinary effusion of this gift was what they were to wait for afterwards at *Jerusalem*. In short  
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what conveyance it was which was then made to them, may best be discover'd from the passage itself, in which the fact is related. <sup>a</sup> St. *John* informs us, that before our Saviour's ascent into heaven, the same commission which He had received from his Father, He convey'd to his apostles. *As my father sent me, even so send I you.* A commission of the same authority to preach the gospel, to found and establish a church on earth: a commission as extensive as the former, except in the instance of redeeming mankind by the sacrifice of Himself, to which it could not extend. The evangelist proceeds to relate, that *when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost.* The effect of which blessing appears, from what follows, to have been power, and authority in the church; for it is immediately subjoin'd as a consequence of it; *Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.* This power, and this authority to act, rule, and direct in the church, to admit men into the society of christians, or exclude them out of it, to censure or absolve in it, being manifestly a dispensation or gift of the Holy Ghost, as appears from other passages of scripture, particularly St. *Paul's* first epistle to the Co-

<sup>a</sup> John 20. 21, 22.

*rintbians*, chap. 12; where the several gifts of the spirit are enumerated; it is therefore said, *receive ye the Holy Ghost*.

Now the church cannot certainly mean to confer any *more*, or any *greater* gifts, than what Christ himself confer'd: a gift of authority to exercise the ministerial function; a gift of ordinary direction and aid in the performance; a gift of blessing to attend, and of confirmation to establish, every *ministerial act*. The *moral character* of the person may remain the same as it was before, though his *power* and *authority* does not.

But further the words in this form may be consider'd, not only as an *expression of authority* in the governing pastor of the church, conveying a *commission*; but likewise as a solemn *blessing* from him, join'd to other prayers, that God would vouchsafe a greater measure of his *directing and sanctifying grace* to the person ordain'd. And it is to be hoped, as well as in charity presumed, that the candidates in general, so prepare themselves in *moral* fitness, as that God may be graciously inclined to confirm the blessing, and to grant the petitions. For it is not to be doubted, but that He who hath promised to be with his church unto the end of the world, will grant every thing that shall be necessary to dignify, adorn, and authorise the acts perform'd in it;



it; to aid, countenance, and support the performers; and to effect in general, that the interests of this church shall be recommended by the moral sanctity of it's ministers. In this sense therefore, and no other, a moral or intellectual sufficiency is the subject of the  *blessing*, which  *may, or may not*, be convey'd, according to the moral, or intellectual fitness of the candidate.

We do not mean to deny, but that God, by the secret operation of his Spirit,  *does and will* grant all necessary supplies of aid and direction to his faithful ministers, in the discharge of their duty, in the promotion of true religion, in the cultivation of their own personal virtue and understanding, as well as the improvement of other men: we do not mean to deny, but that He may vouchsafe greater effusions of his grace to  *some*, than He affords to  *others*; according as the several exigencies of his church shall require. But then we disclaim all  *sensible* impulses upon persons, from whose character nothing  *singular* is expected: we disclaim all  *extraordinary illuminations*, where no  *extraordinary lights* are required: we disclaim all such  *supernatural infusions* of moral sanctity, as might tend to lessen our own  *personal endeavours* after improvement in moral virtue.

The form of ordination then is an outward  
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commission and authority to act. A *licence* it is indeed; but much more than a common *civil licence*. It is a licence from one acting by deputation under Christ, for the conveyance of authority residing in him, according to a rite which Christ and his apostles instituted. Let us proceed therefore as was proposed in the

*Third* place, to answer some objections, which have been rais'd against the form of ordination used by our church.

It has been objected, \* that the candidates are obliged to profess themselves inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, to take upon them this office; whilst it is plain, that they are moved only by a prospect of power and wealth, or the necessity of a maintenance. But how does the objector know this? Is he able to see into the hearts of men? Or grant that in some instances this may be true; yet it is against all the rules of sound reasoning to draw a general conclusion from particular instances. A prospect of preferment or a maintenance, may be a *concurrent* motive, whilst perhaps it is far from being the *only*, or the *principal* one. And it cannot surely be said, that a good provision in life, or the view of it, will necessarily destroy a *natural inclination* to do good.

\* Independent Whig, No. 17.

Nay how does the objector know, but it may be fought more earnestly on this very account, to enable the possessor to become a more extensive Good to mankind? Wealth and honour *have*, and *will* have an influence over the minds of common people. And if this influence has oftentimes been but too successful in promoting vice, why should it not sometimes be made use of in the cause of virtue? But how does it necessarily follow, that because the young candidate has a provident view to raise to himself a comfortable support in life, therefore this is the *only* view that he can have? This surely must, at least, be said to be a very uncharitable way of judging. If in the same manner a clergyman should have argued, that the only motive this author could have for spreading his writings, was an ambition to make himself famous for a singular way of thinking, without any regard to truth; he would have been very ready to exclaim much against the uncharitableness of the clergy in their censures.

But further; does a view to a comfortable subsistence in life, detract any thing from men's *natural abilities* to promote virtue and religion? Or does it obstruct the effects of a good education? Is it not rather a spur to industry and improvement in the younger part of life? to a fur-

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ther progress in knowledge in the advance of it? For let the free-thinker declaim about the disinterestedness of real virtue, or the enthusiast pretend to what effusions of the Holy Spirit, what abstractedness from worldly things, he pleases; yet whilst *men* continue to be *men*, they *must* be actuated by *human* motives. And it is no absurdity to suppose, that the Holy Spirit of God may inwardly concur with, or act upon them by such motives, in the support of religion, as are most agreeable to man's nature, and most likely to prevail. The parent may destine the child for holy orders, with no other view, than because in this way he can make the best provision for him: yet how does it appear to the free-thinker, that God could have no concern in this destination? or that the general course of his providence may not have so order'd things in the circumstances of the parent, that he should resolve thus? The views of the parent may extend themselves to the child, but may not afterwards be his *only* motives.

But perhaps it may be urged, that his future conduct is a proof of what his former views were; that his aim was not to *feed*, but to *eat of the milk of the flock*; that if he has any inward call, it is made plain by his rapaciousness, from whence it must come, not from the Spirit of  
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God, but a spirit of avarice. But alas! is not every legal pursuit of their just rights in the clergy by these men stiled rapaciousness? And yet, why should not *they* be allow'd the same protection of the laws, the same supports of right and property, since they are liable to the same wants and necessities, with *other men*? As they are compound beings, nature requires, that they should provide for the support of their *own bodies*; as their duty obliges them to look after the *souls* of *others*. Unless they could divest themselves of this part of their nature, and become purely spiritual, they must have the same appetites after worldly enjoyments, the same pleasure in any addition made to their temporal welfare, as other men. The apostles, 'tis true, in the infant state of the church, had no preferments to boast of; an argument frequently in the mouths of our enemies. Not indeed that they *courted* poverty, but from the necessity of the times they could not *avoid* it. A *persecuted* church had no rights to settle upon it's ministers. Yet St. *Paul* we see making a merit of it to <sup>a</sup> some of his converts, that he had taken nothing of *them*, whilst at the same time he owns, that on this very account, he had receiv'd larger stipends of *other churches*. But we may fairly reply against our adversary,

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. II. 7, 8.

from his own way of reasoning, that if it is possible for men to be actuated meerly by such motives, it is proper, on this very account, that this question should be proposed by the church, in order to prevent some from appearing, who might have no other call, or intention.

But further; their ensuing conduct is made an evidence against the reality of their call; it is urged, that the heart is not mended, but the morals are often worse, and therefore, the Holy Ghost could have no concern in their mission. But why should some few instances be singled out, and artfully made an objection against the clergy, and the rite of ordination, in general? And let men's original intentions have been ever so sincere; the call of the Holy Ghost ever so full; the grace confer'd ever so certain; yet is it not possible for men to fall from grace? or in the language of holy scripture, to *receive the grace of God in vain*? What will these men say to the treachery of *Judas*? To the falshood of *Peter*? To the cowardice of the *other apostles*? Did not one *betray*? Another *deny* his Master? Did not all *forsake* Him in the bitter hour? Yet if we believe any thing in our religion, we *must* believe, that these were called to be apostles by the Great Author of it, and personally ordain'd by Him. The truth is, ordination leaves men *free-*  
agents,



*agents*, as it found them. And though the man of God is called with an holy calling, yet he is not called to quit his nature. It was never pretended by any serious person, that the hand of the bishop was designed to act like a *spell*, upon the minds of the persons ordain'd. The character indeed which they bear, and the great commission they receive from thence, are motives to stricter holiness: but still they are *but motives*, not *necessary obliging powers*. They are such as may be resisted, or overbalanced by other motives. 'Tis no wonder then that in *this*, as well as all *other* orders of men, there should be some who dishonour the character they bear; but let not the misconduct of a *few* be imputed to all.

However, that I may proceed *fourthly*, to draw an inference or two; since the conduct of particular persons in this order, will always by unreasonable men be made an objection to the whole; nay even to the usefulness of ordination itself; since the effect of the blessing depends much upon the moral fitness of the person ordain'd; it

1<sup>st</sup>, Becomes every candidate for the sacred office to resolve seriously, that he will take heed to himself, not only for his *own* sake, but for the sake of that people over which the *Holy Ghost* makes

*makes him overseer* : and so to prepare himself in moral sanctity, that he may appear qualified in the sight of God to receive a blessing. His life, to the generality of men, will be the best proof of his *mission*. This is *visible* sanctity ; which is much better calculated to gain attention, than meer abstract reasoning about the sacredness of his vocation. A *life* may convince, where *discourse* cannot.

2dly, It becomes all christians, according to our Saviour's direction, to *pray that God will send forth labourers into his harvest* : that He will incline able and deserving men to take upon them the sacred task of ministring in his church ; having blessed them with the opportunities of a proper education. *The field of harvest is still great, and the labourers are few*, in comparison of the great numbers who remain yet to be converted to the *profession* of the true religion, or to *sincerity* in it. But since it is possible that some may be lawfully *sent*, and yet afterwards neglect the duties of their mission, It remains

*Lastly*, for us to pray to the great disposer of hearts, that He will send forth *diligent and industrious labourers into his harvest*. The christian world is represented under the similitude of a field, in which not only wheat, but also tares grow up. These will always afford sufficient employment

ployment to the man of God, and as it will be his care and study, so will it be his glory, by a peculiar kind of cultivation herein, to surpass the art of the common husbandman, and convert these tares into good grain.

As long as there shall be found men upon earth, fond of new opinions, prone to vice, or indolent enough to acquiesce in error, a sufficient task will always remain before him. It should therefore be the subject of his most earnest application, (if he would prove the reality of his *call*, by his *intention* of doing good) to convince the *erroneous* by reason, and sound argument; to feed the *ignorant* with wholesome doctrine; to reclaim the *vicious* by all the methods of admonition, and persuasion; both by the mercies, and terrors of the Lord; but above all by the winning influence of example: to walk before his flock in the right path. Forasmuch as the men of this world will hardly be persuaded, that their guide is assured of his way, till they see him walking on invariably in it. The conduct of the guide will always be more visible, as it will always be more industriously enquired after, than that of other men. The man of God is the *city set upon a hill*, a direction to the traveller: may he therefore be not only as conspicuous, but as steadfast, as such a director. May the *lips of the priest retain*



*tain knowledge, and his life instruction! May he be ready to give an answer to every one, that asketh him a question, and may his hopes shine forth in his conversation! In short: as the Lord of the harvest hath sent him forth into his field, that great field the world, may he faithfully, and industriously labour in it, endeavouring to correct the bad soil, to cherish and improve the good, and so to go on his way, bearing forth good seed, that when his Lord shall summon him back to give an account of his labours, he may come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him!*

F I N I S.

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